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CORRECTIONAL WORK IN MICHIGAN

Michigan's first State institution was a Penitentiary, which was established to take the place of the county "goals" of territorial days. Its first published report was issued in 1849. It contained this statement: "As there is room in the left wing cells to accommodate and secure 360 men, and as all concede the fact that such number will not be filled in less than fifty years, the whole plant will be extensive enough for the wants of the State for a century hence." In forty years, however, the prison population of Michigan has reached 1500. Two prisons have since been built: The Michigan Reformatory and the Branch of the State Prison in the Upper Peninsula. The methods of appointments of the wardens in the Michigan prisons were constantly changed until 1893, when it was finally vested in the Board of Control of each prison.

While only one of Michigan's prisons is termed a Reformatory, in each of them reformatory work is considered of first importance: Schools are maintained in each, covering nine grades, the sessions held four evenings each week. All prisoners under forty years of age who have not received a common school education are required to attend, except such as are excused by the prison physician, or by the superintendent of the school; promotions from lower to higher grades in the school are determined by the superintendent on written examinations. Libraries of well selected books are in each of the prisons; each prisoner is allowed one book, which he can retain four weeks if necessary, and on its return can draw another. The school superintendents report that the demand for the better class of reading is increasing. Regular Sunday preaching services are held each week in pleasant, well-appointed chapels, conducted by the chaplain, who is one of the recognized officers of the prison, at which all inmates are required to be present. Sunday bible schools are held, and also a prayer meeting one evening in each week, the attendance at which is voluntary. The grading of prisoners required in the Michigan penitentiaries, and the system of marking adopted, has proved beneficial. The

good results of these efforts to reform is witnessed by the fact that less than ten per cent. of all the prisoners paroled have forfeited their parole during the eight years in which the parole law has been in force.

Prison labor, as provided for in Michigan, has thus far proved less troublesome than in many of the States; the entire matter is left in the hands of the joint Prison Boards, they deciding what the prison industries shall be. The Boards are required to meet twice a year in joint session to consider them, which makes the difficult problem of prison labor very elastic. Strong efforts have been made in the legislature from time to time to circumscribe and limit these industries, but so far no change has been made since the law providing for them was enacted in 1893; what the future has in store for us through subservience to trades unions cannot be foretold; now the only limit placed on the joint Board is that it shall select diversified lines of industry, so as to interfere as little as possible with the lines carried on by the citizens of the State. After unsuccessful efforts in four successive legislatures for the submission to popular vote of an amendment to the constitution, to provide for an indeterminate sentence law, the legislature of 1901 finally adopted the necessary resolution. In November of 1902 the people by a majority vote of 68,000 so amended the constitution, and the legislature of 1903 enacted an indeterminate sentence law applicable to all convicts: The same legislature provided for placing on probation both adult criminals and juvenile offenders.

As early as 1855 it was thought necessary to make State provision for the incarceration and punishment of juvenile offenders in Michigan. The legislature of that year made an appropriation for a House of Correction for Juvenile Offenders: a name quite in harmony with theories then prevalent regarding the treatment of the embryo-criminals, for whom the institution was intended—and, too, quite in keeping with the architectural design of the buildings, which provided for small rooms or cells, in which the boy was to be confined, and from which, through narrow, grated windows, he was to look out upon his circumscribed world; the grounds surrounded by a high board fence to make them secure. Fifty-four embryonic criminals were committed to the institution the first year—three

of whom were girls; these were soon otherwise disposed of, however, and no more girls were sent there.

The experience in dealing with the problems of juvenile delinquency has resulted in many changes in this old State institution. The change of the name, which has twice occurred, clearly indicates the progress which has been made. The first change of name was to "The Reform School for Boys," and next to "The Industrial School for Boys." The modifications in the law relative to the ages of those committed and the terms of detention are also indications of progress. At first, all under fifteen years of age could be sentenced to this institution, with a proviso that, in the discretion of the court, boys between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one years might also be sentenced here, and that those committed should be held until they were twenty-one years of age. From time to time many changes were made in these respects, until now the law provides for the commitment of boys between the ages of ten and sixteen years, to be held until they are seventeen years of age, unless sooner discharged by order of the Board of Control. The average time the boys have remained in the institution is about two years, a large percentage being placed out in approved homes, under the supervision of the institution and the county agents of the State.

What emphasizes the upward progress made in this institution more, perhaps, than any other one thing, is its present architectural design. The prison-like buildings, with their narrow, barred windows, have all disappeared, and in their places are family cottages with bright school-rooms and cheerful dormitories, with pleasant apartments for a man and his wife, who constitute the "head of the family" of the boys who occupy the building. No fences shut from sight the fine State property, or stand a constant temptation to the boy to escape over. The whole manner of conducting this school is in harmony with its name and appearance. Beside the regular school-room work required each half day, industrial training is given in the printing office, the tailor, shoe, carpenter and paint shops, the engine and dining-rooms, in kitchen and dormitories, and on the farm and in the green-house. The boys form a very creditable battalion of ten infantry companies, with a fine brass band. All youthful sports are encouraged, and the

ample ground at the rear of each cottage gives space for enjoying them, while a large pond on the grounds supplies a skating park. Chapel services and Sunday school are conducted, and a well selected library is maintained.

It was not until 1879 that any definite steps were taken in Michigan to provide a State institution for female juvenile offenders. Its importance had been the subject of discussion since 1861, when the law was repealed which permitted the sending of girls to the Reformatory for Juveniles at Lansing. In its report of 1877-8 the State Board of Corrections and Charities calls attention to the subject in the following emphatic words: "A reform school or an industrial home for exposed or criminal young girls is a necessity that is so manifested by public opinion as to be almost mandatory in its expression". The legislature which immediately followed took heed and provided for a "Reform School for Girls," and made the necessary appropriation for the buildings and for the maintenance of the school. The cottage system of building was adopted from the first and has never been abandoned. The school was opened in August, 1881. Two years later the "Reform School for Girls" was re-christened the "Industrial Home for Girls." During the last decade over thirteen hundred girls have passed through this home, where every effort is made to fit the girls physically, mentally and morally, and by industrial training, to be good mothers. A graded school of seven grades is maintained, in which eight day school teachers are employed, where a half of each day school instruction is given. Industrial training in cooking, in house and laundry work, in plain sewing and dressmaking, in gardening, in lawn, greenhouse and light farm work is had. Sunday services are conducted, and Sunday-school instruction received. The spiritual welfare of the Roman Catholic Girls is cared for by the priest and Sisters at Adrian. The age at which girls could be committed to the Home has changed from time to time as experience dictated, until it is now over ten years and under seventeen years of age, and to be detained until twenty-one years old, with a proviso in the law which authorizes the Board of Guardians to reduce such length of sentence in its discretion. Girls are held only long enough to fit them to enter homes, and when an approved home is found for a girl she is assigned to the home if she is prepared to be placed out on indenture.

The Home has an orchestra of twenty-two girls, a brass band of eighteen pieces and a fife and drum corps for use at military drill, which is supervised by an officer of the city company. Girls are placed only in country homes; experience has taught that such rather than city or village homes are in every respect preferable. Two and a quarter years is the average time girls have been held in the Home.

Michigan's legislatures have, as a general rule, fostered her institutions, making appropriations, as a whole, without parsimony, while insisting on true economy; and her Governors have ever favored and forwarded wise progress in correctional work.

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